HINDU HOLIDAYS

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BY

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TO

T. J. BENNETT, Esq., C.I.E.

In grateful remembrance of the encouragement given by him to the Author's first literary attempt connected with the *Times of India*, the leading paper of Asia, and in sincere admiration of his sterling abilities in the field of journalism.

PREFACE.

THE following pages were contributed at the desire of Mr. T. J. Bennett, to the *Times of India* in the years 1900 and 1901. The proprietors of the paper having permitted the author to publish the same in a book-form, they are now offered to the public.

The life of a nation is best depicted by the description given of its festivals, and the Hindus, being a civilized nation from remote antiquity, have had their own holidays both to create and to express joy. Their new year's day which, according to the Shak era, begins on the Gudipadwa day, and according to the Samvat era begins on the Balipratipada day, marks two important periods in the Hindu Calendar, namely, the approach of hot and cold seasons.

Hero worship, religious devotion, social enjoyments, and the observance of particular rites and ceremonies with a definite object in view, such as preservation of women from widowhood, freedom from the guilt of committing heinous crimes, the preservation of children from death in infancy, the acquisition of wealth, the restoration of lost power, fortune or kingdom, the remembrance, worship and feeding of the departed spirits of ancestors, have their characteristic holidays.

Viewed in this light each Hindu holiday has an importance of its own, and the observance of it is calculated not only to strengthen devotion but to acquire merit and disturb the otherwise dull monotony of life.

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GUDI PADVA HOLIDAY.

THE Gudi Padva holiday is also known as the Dhwajaropan day, or the day for the planting of a pole wrapped around with a flag or cloth, consisting of a gold embroidered silk pitamber and surmounted with a brass, copper, or silver vessel in front of the house. It is the first day of the Hindu new year, called the Shálivâhan or Shakera. It falls on the first day of the month of Chaitra, and is regarded by the Hindus as a very auspicious day for commencing building operations or undertaking a new work. Each Hindu family erects a pole of the above description in imitation of the banners of Indra unfurled in heaven in his honour. It is customary to eat the leaves of the bitter nim tree (*Melia azadirachta*) this day as the act is believed to be conducive to health, the tree being the offspring of the heavenly ambrosia. New calendars are bought and worshipped and astrologers consulted as to the good or bad signs of the year in general.

Early in the morning of the day the front of the house is cowdunged, and a drawing of *rangoli* or powder made by pounding particular soft stones is made by ladies thereon,

and a wooden square stool, called *chaurang*, is placed in the centre with a pot filled with water and a rupee placed inside and a cocoa-nut over it and worshipped, and sweetmeats eaten in honour of the holiday. In the Sinhásan-battishi an account of Vikram and Shálivâhan, the founder of the Shakera, is given, which is shortly as follows: There lived in Purandharpur a rich merchant who, before his death, gave to each of his four sons a sealed earthen pot with an injunction not to open it until he died. When the pots were opened, the first was found to contain earth, the second coals, the third bones, and the fourth bran. Vikram was asked to explain the meaning of the contents, but he could not do so. The sons then went to Pratisthan, but there also neither the king nor anybody else could solve the enigma. A wonderful child, however, succeeded in explaining the same. The child was the offspring of a Brahman widow, who had lost her husband when she was very young. She had two brothers. She conceived by a Nag-kumara (or Takshak), and the brothers, being ashamed of their sister's conduct, left the country. The unfortunate widow was, in her distress, sheltered by a potter, where she was delivered of a male child, who was called Shálíváhan by his mother. The child, hearing of the Brahman's riddle, went to the king and answered the

enigma as follows: The first pot containing earth entitled the owner to his father's landed property; the second containing coals gave the second son all the timber and wood belonging to the father, the third pot gave to the owner the elephants, horses, cattle, and animals of all kinds belonging to the estate; and the fourth son got all corn and grain which belonged to the father.

Vikram, on hearing this, sent for the child, but he refused to go, and said that instead of his going to Vikram, there would be a time when he would come to the child. Vikram was very angry at this impudent answer, and, with the object of killing Shálivâhan, advanced with a large army against the latter, who making clay figures of soldiers animated them. A desperate battle was fought, but the Nag-kumar, or son of the great serpent, stupefied Vikram's army, who finding his soldiers asleep implored the assistance of Vásuki, who gave his amrit with which he revived his troops, and Shálivâhan, hearing of this, sent two men for some of it, and Vikram complied with his request, and here ends the legend. Another account states that there was a voice from heaven which settled the dispute between the rival combatants by allowing each of them to reign on the two portions of the country separ-ated by the Narbada river.

Shálivâhan is described as a devout and learned man, who, after a time, renounced the world and passed his remaining days in retirement and meditation. The peculiarities with these two remarkable characters are that a great deal of their life is enveloped in mystery, and several Vikrams and Shálivâhans have from time to time risen to vie with each other as rival combatants. There is an interesting account given of Vikram and Shálivâhan by Captain Francis Wilford in the *Asiatic Researches*, Vol. IX. A learned and critical account of Shálivâhan also appears in a paper contributed by the late Rao Saheb Vishvanath Narayan Mandlik to the journal of the Bombay Branch, Royal Asiatic Society, and reprinted in the "Life and Writings" of the late Rao Saheb by his adopted son, Mr. Narayan Vishvanath Mandlik, both of which productions are very instructive, and throw considerable light over a remote and obscure period in Indian history.

RAM NAVAMI FESTIVAL.

THIS festival, which begins on the Gudi Padva day, or the first day of the Hindu month Chaitra, and lasts till Ram Navami, is held in honour of Ramchandra, the eldest son of Dashratha, king of Ayodhya and the seventh incarnation of Vishnu. Although Dashratha had three wives, named Kausalyá, Sumitrá, and Kaikei, he had no children for a long time, and was consequently involved in anxiety and used to penetrate deep forests to forget his cares by having recourse to hunting.

One night he dreamt an evil dream wherein he killed two innocent men and a woman, and Dashratha, having consulted his guru, Vasishtha, about it, was told that the dream meant an impending calamity which would have to be expiated by a sacrifice, as he would be guilty of having killed three animals. Dashratha on the next day went on a hunting excursion, and, although night came on, he did not get any big game. In his disappointment he reached a lake and, having climbed a tree, was waiting for an opportunity to kill some big game, when a pilgrim, named Shrávan, happened to approach the lake in order to

quench the thirst of his two aged parents, whom he carried in a *káwad*, or bamboo lath, provided with slings at each end for the conveyance across the shoulder of baskets. Shrávan placed the *káwad* on the ground, and with a pot in his hand went up to the water, and while he was filling it up, he was hit by an arrow discharged from Dashratha's bow. The latter, hearing a human voice in the agony of death, came down and saw Shrávan mortally wounded. Although he was on the point of death, he told Dashratha not to be sorry for what had happened, but to go and give his thirsty old parents water to drink in silence, otherwise they would die. Dashratha tried to give them water without saying a word, but they would not drink until he told them who he was. The king was greatly moved at the sight of the aged parents left helpless without their natural protector, and said that he had accidentally killed their son with an arrow. The parents of Shrávan then cursed the king, saying that he would also die of a broken heart in the absence of his sons, and gave up the ghost.

The king, having cremated the remains of the three persons, returned to Ayodhya with feelings of joy at the thought that the curse pronounced by Shrávan's parents was a blessing in disguise, as he was thereby sure to get

offspring first and die afterwards. Famine then devastated the kingdom for twelve years. A desperate battle was fought between the gods and the demons, the former headed by Dashratha and the latter by Vrishparva. It was during this battle that Kaikei, the third wife of the king, who had accompanied him to the battlefield, was instrumental in saving his chariot from tumbling down by means of her hand, which supported it on one side. The king, who had not noticed this daring deed of his wife in the heat of the battle, was so much pleased with her that he cordially embraced her, and asked her to take two blessings from him, when she said that she would do so at the proper time. On the king's triumphant entry into his capital there was a copious shower of rain.

The king then performed the Putreshti sacrifice in order to obtain male offspring. Shringrishi, the son of Vibhándak, was invited to officiate at the ceremony, and, as a reward for his trouble, Dashratha gave him his foster-daughter in marriage. Vibhándak was greatly delighted to see his son and daughter-in-law thus united in holy wedlock, and blessed the king by saying that he would soon get four illustrious sons. The three wives accordingly conceived and in due time were delivered of four sons. Ramchandra was born by

Dashratha's first wife, Kausalyá, who was a learned lady ; Lakshman and Shatrughna were born by Sumitra, who was noted for her ardent devotion ; and Bharat was born by Kaikei, who was an obstinate, selfish, and hot-tempered woman.

Dashratha in the usual way ascertained from each of his three wives what was uppermost in her mind. The first wife could think of nothing except the great Ravan, whom her future son was to kill after considerable trouble and annoyance, depicted in the Ramayan by the powerful pen of the great and learned Valmik Rishi. The second wife could think of nothing but the best way in which her future son, Lakshman, was to obey the command of his elder brother, Shri Ram. The third wife, who was selfish to the core, always thought of the three sons of the elder Ranis removed from their kingdom and pass their time in the wilderness, and her own son, Bharat, occupying the throne.

The date of the birth of Raghunâth was the 9th of the month of Chaitra, at noon, on the rising of the Pusa Nakshatra. This festival is also known by the name of Vasanti Navratras, as it is held in spring. Of all the nine days of the festival the last, or the Ram Navami day, is the greatest. Early in the morning the Hindus bathe, and the whole

family puts on rich dresses. From nine to twelve o'clock noon a kirtan is preached in the different Hindu temples, narrating the events immediately preceding the birth of the illustrious hero of the Ramayan, who belonged to the solar race of kings reigning at Ayodhya. Exactly as the clock strikes twelve, gulal powder is thrown about, lullabies are sung in honour of the new-born child, the Hardas blesses the whole assembly in the name of Raghunandan, a prasad called *sunthavda*, made up of dry-ginger powder mixed with sugar, is distributed, and the meeting disperses. *Shrikhand puri* is the chief dish the Hindus enjoy this day.

HANUMAN JAYANTI HOLIDAY.

THIS holiday, celebrated in commemoration of the birth of Hanuman or Maruti, the head of the army of monkeys, utilized by Ram in his war with Ravan, the demon-king of Lanka, falls on the fifteenth of the Hindu month Chaitra.

The story of his birth as narrated in the Ramayan and several Praktit works is shortly as follows: At the completion of the Putreshti sacrifice, performed by king Dashratha with the object of getting offspring, Yadnya Narayan appeared from the fire, and gave a dish of *khir* made of rice, milk and sugar to Shringrishi and told him to turn it into *pindas* or balls, and distribute them among the three queens without loss of time, otherwise the whole object of the sacrificial ceremony would be frustrated. So saying he disappeared, and Vasishtha turned the Prasad into three equal balls, and gave the first one to Kausalyá, the senior Rani, whereupon the youngest queen, Kaikei, was greatly excited, and said that she was the favourite wife of the king, and was instrumental in seeing him come victorious from the battlefield by supporting his chariot with her hand, as witnessed by Indra and

the other gods, and although Kausalyá was the senior in age, she was superior to the other two queens in point of merit. Just as the angry Rani was brooding over the fancied injury done to her, with a downcast countenance, a kite suddenly approached her and snatched away the ball from her hand, and the whole assembly was involved in grief. Kaikei fell on the ground disconsolate and began to cry. The king was also greatly grieved at the mishap, and was at a loss what to do. In the meantime the two senior Ranis came to her rescue, and magnanimously parted with half the ball given to each of them in favor of Kaikei.

Anjani, the wife of the monkey-king, Kesari, who had been praying for a number of years on the Vishvamukha Parwat, near the Neilgherry Hills, for the gift of a valiant and devout son, was blessed at last by Shankar, saying that she would get one who would be the very incarnation of the eleventh Maha Rudra, and that she should engage herself, with closed eyes, in meditation by putting her hands side by side, so as to form a cavity, and hollowing the palms. She did so, and the kite that had snatched away the ball from Kaikei's hand accidentally dropped it into her palms so joined together, and Anjani ate it as ordered by Shanker. The result was the birth of

Hanuman in due time. Maruti is called the son of Vayu, for the reason that a strong gust of wind was instrumental in dropping the ball of *khir* from the mouth of the kite, who was in her former birth a courtesan of Swarga, named Suvarchas, but, being cursed by Brahma, became a kite, and was, as promised by him, restored to her former position for her disinterested service done to Anjani.

The first exhibition of his supernatural power that Hanuman made soon after his birth in the morning was the ascent to the heavens to grasp the sun under the mistaken belief that it was a ripe fruit, when a desperate battle was fought between him and Indra, and the gods ultimately blessed Hanuman for his undaunted courage and valour. Indra said that his thunderbolt would never affect Hanuman as he was *Vajradehi*. Kuber blessed him, saying that he would kill hundreds of giants. Rasadhipati said that his strength would never fail him, and the other gods in their turn blessed the great servant and disciple of Ramchandra in various ways.

It is said that the repetition of the Hanuman Kavach, which consists of mystical verses in praise of this deified hero, with full faith and ardent devotion in a temple dedicated to his worship 125,000 times, confers on the devotee

the supernatural power of flying through the air, or levitation, and some of the other powers known as the eight Siddhis. Maruti is also looked upon as a *Chiranjiv*, or one of the eight saints believed to have lived a whole *Kalpa*, or 432 millions of years. He is also said to be always present in the disguise of a man, wherever the kirtan relating to the adventures of Shri Ram is preached by a Hardas.

Among the services rendered by this faithful lieutenant to his chief and narrated in the Ramayan and other works may be mentioned his valuable assistance in the construction of the mound between Rameshwar and Ceylon, the successful search for, and discovery of, the captive Sita in Lanka, the burning of the capital of Ravan, and the slaughter of innumerable powerful demons, the carrying of Dronagiri to Lanka for the purpose of saving the life of Lakshaman, who was lying insensible on the battlefield, the protection given by him to Arjun by sitting on the top of his banner, and several other feats of a daring and valorous nature.

It is customary among the Hindus in general, and those labouring under the curse or displeasure of the planet Saturn, who is an oilman by caste, to offer sweet oil mixed with minium or red lead and *udid* pulse (*Phaseolus*

radiatus) and the flowers and leaves of the rui tree to Hanuman on Saturdays, as that day is held particularly sacred to this deity.

In the Hindu Shastras nine kinds of worship of the *Supreme God* or of an idol representative of some god are mentioned, such as *shravan*, *kirtan*, *etc.* The seventh kind of worship is called *dasya*, or service in general, and Hanuman and Garud are cited as the best exemplars of this kind of devotion. Maruti is also noted along with Narad, Bhishma and Kartik Swámi for his exemplary *Brahmacharya* or celibacy.

VATA PORNIMA HOLIDAY.

ON the 15th of Jeshtha Shud the above holiday is observed by Hindu married women. It is a fast day, and is consecrated to the worship of the Vata or Vada tree (*Ficus indica*) by Hindu ladies to preserve them from widowhood.

The origin of this holiday goes back to remote antiquity. Dharma once requested Lomasha Rishi to tell him if there lived in former times a woman so chaste, beautiful, and sweet-tongued as Draupadi. The Muni, in answer to the above question, narrated the following account of Savitri :—

In former times there lived in Madra Desha a generous, virtuous, and learned prince, named Ashvapati, who, having no male issue, prayed incessantly for eighteen years, Savitri, the wife of Brahma, for the gift of a son. The goddess was pleased to promise that instead of a son he would be blessed with a daughter, whose fame as a chaste woman would be sung by the Puranas. In due time the Rani gave birth to a daughter named Savitri. As she reached nubile age, the prince tried his best to find out a suitable

husband for her, but being unsuccessful in his attempt, he asked his daughter to undertake the task herself. She then travelled a great deal in quest of a husband, and ultimately fixed her choice upon Satyavan, the son of Dyumatsen.

In the meantime Narad visited the prince and tried to dissuade him from offering Savitri in marriage to Satyavan, as his father was a blind, penniless man, wandering from place to place in quest of the necessaries of life, and deprived of his patrimony by his kinsmen. Savitri, on being asked by her father to change her mind, resolved to marry none but Satyavan, and plainly told him that all men except the object of her choice were her fathers, brothers, or sons, as they were respectively her seniors, equals, or juniors in age. So far as riches or poverty went, they were like a passing cloud, but she was as firm as the pole-star in her determination. Narad then went so far as to predict that Satyavan was sure to die after a year, when she said that she would also die with him, but if at all there was any moral merit in her, she would even avert the calamity predicted by the Muni. Narad blessed her saying that as she was a righteous woman, even that which was uppermost in her mind would happen and disappear.

Ashvapati then took his daughter into the wilderness, where Dyumatsen was passing his days in helpless poverty. He also tried to dissuade the prince from giving his lovely daughter in marriage to his son, but on Ashvapati informing him of her firm resolution he was obliged to yield, and on a propitious day the marriage of Satyavan with Savitri was duly solemnized.

Savitri then discharged her daily domestic duties as became a dutiful wife and daughter-in-law for nearly a year, when she remembered that there were only four days wanting to complete the period mentioned by the Muni. She then fasted for three full days, not even touching any fruit, root, or water, although she was constantly told by her father-in-law not to fast, but she kept back the secret from all. On the morning of the fourth day Satyavan went into the woods, unmindful of the death that awaited him, with an axe in his hand in search of fruit and roots. Savitri, seeing that he could not be dissuaded from going into the wilderness, also accompanied him in his wandering. At the approach of night, Satyavan stood beneath a Vata tree and began chopping off the branches, when suddenly a heavy piece of wood struck him on the head and he fell down and fainted. The loving wife tried her best to revive him, but he did not rally, and died at midnight.

While Savitri was lamenting the death of her beloved husband, Yama approached the corpse, and having removed the astral body from it proceeded on his way southward. Savitri followed him, and begged him to say who he was. Yama told her that as she was renowned for her chastity, he was there in person to take her husband to his regions, and did not send his attendants as on ordinary occasions. He tried his best to dissuade her from following him, and told her to cremate her husband's remains, but she said she would on no account leave her husband, and would follow him wherever he went, unless he was pleased to restore her husband to life, which he could easily do if he really pitied her as his daughter, and did not like to see her become a widow. Yama said that he was so much pleased with her that she was at liberty to ask for any boon she liked except the restoration of her husband's life. She then prayed for the restoration of her father-in-law's sight, which, being granted, he again exhorted her to go back, but she still followed him, saying that she was bent upon going to her father's house, meaning Patal, and said that if she was really faithful to her husband in life, he, Yama, would not now forsake her as a helpless widow. He again asked her for another boon, and she solicited him to restore her father-in-law to his lost patrimony, to

which Yama was pleased to say amen. A third blessing was given to her, namely, the birth of a hundred sons to her father-in-law, and still she would not desist from following him. He then asked her to take a fourth blessing, which was that she should be called Janma Savitri, Saubhagyavati, and Mangal Mahishwari, which was readily granted, and she accordingly went back greatly delighted to the place where the corpse was lying, and, as ordered by Yama, touched her husband's chin with her hand and he was instantly animated.

ASHADI EKADASHI HOLIDAY.

THE Ashadi Ekadashi falls on the 11th of the Hindu month Ashad and is held sacred to Vishnu. It is observed by all classes of Hindus as a fast day, and is employed in reading different religious books as a sort of daily devotional exercise, lasting for four months, known as Chaturmas, and marks the commencement of the slumber of Vishnu, and hence it is also known as Shayani Ekadashi. Daily kirtans begin to be delivered in celebration of the above devotional period from this day in different Hindu temples at night. A large fair is held at Matunga, where the shrine of Vithoba is visited by all classes of Hindus from early morning to sunset, and garlands of the holy basil are offered to the deity. Pandharpur, on the banks of Chandrabhaga, is also visited by pilgrims from different parts of the country on this holiday.

Soon after the war narrated in the Mahabharat was over, Dharma, feeling disconsolate on account of the guilt incurred by the slaughter of his numerous kinsmen, requested Krishna, through his sister Draupadi, to tell them the best means of removing the same. Krishna exhorted them to observe the Ekadashi Vrat,

which was capable of removing the guilt incurred by the commission of heinous crimes. Dharma and Arjun then solicited Krishna to narrate the history of the Vrat, giving the origin of Ekadashi, her parentage, and the favour done by the virgin goddess to the gods in general, and he was pleased to give the following account.

In former times there lived a mighty *daitya* named Mridumanya, the son of Kumbha, who was a great devotee of Shankar, and pleased him so much by his exemplary devotion that the god at once conferred on him the boon of immortality, but soon after, seeing that the *daitya* was so much elated by the blessing that he became a terror to gods and men, Shankar revoked it by saying that he would be killed by a woman created without parents, although he would be so powerful as to vanquish even the Hindu Trinity, Indra and the other gods. So saying Shankar disappeared. The *daitya* was very angry with Mahdev, and in revenge first went to fight with Indra, and the latter, in terror of the *daitya*, sought the shelter of Bramha in his heaven, known as Satyaloka, whither also the *daitya* followed him, and Bramha himself was consequently obliged to run in company with his wife, Savitri, to Vaikuntha, the residence of Vishnu. Just as the latter was engaged in ascertaining from

Bramha the cause of his precipitate flight, the *daitya* reached Vaikuntha and challenged Vishnu to single combat, whereupon a desperate fight took place between the god and the *daitya*, and Vishnu, having with difficulty freed himself from the grasp of Mridumanya, took shelter at Kailas, the residence of Shankar, in the company of his wife, Lakshmi, Bramha and Savitri and the other gods. Shankar, in ascertaining the object of their visit to Kailas, was informed by Vishnu that it was his misplaced boon conferred on the *daitya* Mridumanya for his devotion that had involved all the gods in their present difficulty. In the meantime the *daitya* approached Kailas, and there was a terrible uproar in the latter place, when Shankar prepared himself to fight with the enemy. The *daitya* called upon the trinity to surrender, whereupon all of them with their wives betook themselves to the summit of the Trikut Mountain and sought shelter in the hollow of a dhatri tree (*Phyllanthus emblica*) or emblic myrabollam, growing in the midst of the wilderness.

The trinity, being at a loss to know where they should go to save their lives, resolved to remain in the hollow of the tree with their respective wives, and breathed a deep breath, when instantly a virgin appeared before them. It was the rainy season, and all

the six persons had a shower bath, and were obliged to pass the day without touching any food in sleepless anxiety. As soon as they saw the virgin preparing herself to go out of the hollow, they, with folded hands, besought her to save them by killing the *daitya*. Mridumanya, who was already standing at the mouth of the hollow, with a terrific countenance, saw her, and inquired who she was, and what had brought her into the great wilderness. She replied that he had nothing to do with her name, and that she was blessed by Shankar with the boon of becoming his slayer, and, therefore, he was there himself to seek his death at her hands. So saying she rushed upon him and cut off his head and hands with her sword and went up to the firmament. The yoginis, or female attendants of Durga, then blessed her, saying that she was the delivery of the helpless and the fallen. All the six persons came out of the hollow, and fell prostrate before her as their saviour, when she said that her name was Ekadashi, and that she had no father or mother, but was born out of their own breath, and exhorted them to observe the Vrat every fortnight as they had successfully done that day, assuring them that it would free them from the guilt of committing heinous crimes.

NAG PUNCHMI HOLIDAY.

THIS Hindu holiday, which falls on the 5th of Shravan, is sacred to the worship of the demi-gods in the form of Nagas or serpents. An earthen image of a serpent is brought by each family, or a painting of a family of five, seven, or nine serpents is made on a wall with rubbed sandalwood or turmeric. The worship of the Nagas is performed early in the morning by Hindu women, when offerings of flowers, rubbed sandalwood, turmeric, parched rice and beans, or parched gram and jowari (*Holcus sorghum*) are made to the painted serpents. The lighting and waving of lamps, the offering of incense, and the placing of food and fruit forms part of the ceremony. It is customary to eat only boiled food this day, and the dishes are generally coarser than on other holidays. Throughout the day a lamp is kept burning near the painting or image, and milk and edibles are kept before it. In the evening flowers and incense are again offered, lights waved, and edibles put before the painting or image, and one or more lamps are kept lighted throughout the night which is passed by the worshippers in playing and is regarded by some as keeping the serpents awake. Nag-

pada, near Byculla, presents a busy scene this day, where in the evening a large fair is held in honor of this festival.

At the conclusion of the morning worship, it is customary for all the ladies and children in the house to gather together, when an elderly woman relates the following story, believed by the generality of the Hindu community on this side as the origin of the ceremony: There lived in Manipur a Gavada Brahman, who was ignorant of the sanctity of this day. He was not aware of the prohibition of ploughing, digging, picking and plucking, burning and roasting on this day, and he as usual went to plough his field. A hole in the field contained the young ones of a nagin, or female serpent, and the plough striking them all the young ones died. On the return of the nagin she found that all her young ones were dead and was greatly enraged and set out to find the person who had killed them. She reached the house of the Gavada, and saw that there were marks of blood on his plough, and thereupon concluded that it was he who had killed her young ones. She therefore bit the Brahman and all the members of his family, who had been asleep, and killed them. The daughter of the Gavada was living in a neighbouring village, and in order that the whole family might become extinct, the nagin

went to bite her also. But on reaching the daughter's residence she found that the former had painted the nagas and duly worshipped them. The nagin enjoyed the offerings, and, being pleased, told the girl that she had killed her father and all other persons in her maternal home in revenge for the death of her young ones, killed by her father while ploughing his field that day, and that she had come there to bite her also, but as the nagas were remembered and worshipped by her, she was pleased and did not bite her. On the daughter's asking the serpent to tell her some remedy whereby the dead might be restored to life, she was pleased to give her some nectar, and told her to sprinkle it on their bodies. Meanwhile the inhabitants of the Brahman's village began to inquire why the Gavada had not yet risen, and opening the door found all the members of the family dead. Just at that time the Brahman's daughter reached her father's house, and sprinkling the nectar upon the dead persons restored them to life. She then related to her father the cause of the death of the members of his family and their restoration to life, and exhorted them to observe the Nagpanchmi Vrat on the 5th of Shravan every year.

It is customary for the lady reciting the above story and her audience to take a few

grains of rice in their hands at its commencement, and at the end to exchange them and to stick them to their foreheads. The worship is generally conducted according to the directions given in a book called Vratraja, compiled by Vishvanath Bhatta of Sangameshwar.

In the Satara and Kholapur districts private schools are generally closed on this day, and the pupils bathe, and, clad in holiday attire, are taken in grand processions to some river or other watering place outside the town or village.

In the province of Guzerat also the Nagpanchmi is observed by all classes of Hindus. There the serpents are drawn in black ink either on the walls or the doors of houses. The process of worship in this province is similar to that observed in other provinces, except that cowdung is offered before incense, flowers, and other things, and at the end of the ceremony green grass and butter are placed before the paintings. Cups of milk are also put in different corners of the house as offerings to living serpents, and a sight of one is considered very lucky.

COCOANUT DAY.

THE 15th of Shravan Shud is well known among the Hindus as Narli Poornima, or "cocoanut holiday." It has no Puranic origin. On this day Guzerati Brahmans visit the houses of their patrons and tie a *rakhi*, or piece of silk, a bit of tinsel, or a cotton string around the wrist, and pronounce the following benediction in the form of a prayer given in the Nirnaya Sindhu :—

"O Raksha, in you I bind all those evil deeds which bound king Bali, the lord of the Danavas! I beseech you not to move."

This is known as Raksha Bandhan, and hence this holiday is also called Rakhi Poornima. On this day is also performed by the Brahmans the *shravni*, or purificatory ceremony, with the object of absolving themselves from the sins of omission and commission they may have been guilty of during the past year. It is known as *rik shravni* and *yajuh shravni*, from the two distinct divisions of the Brahmans known as Rigvedi and Yajurvedi. The peculiarity of these divisions is that although both classes may dine together, they are prohibited from intermarrying among themselves.

The *shravni* ceremony is generally performed by a group of Brahmans, and consists first of the taking of Panchagavya, or the five products of the cow. Then follows the worship of Gajanan and the first Homa or sacrificial fire. The assembled group then worship the seven celebrated Rishis or sages of antiquity. They are, according to the Shatpath Brahman, Gautam, Bharadwaj, Vishwamitra, Jamadagni, Vasishta, Kasyap, and Atri, and according to the Mahabharat, Marichi, Atri, Angiras, Puluha, Kratu, Pulastya, and Vasishta. The ceremony ends with another Homa, and the distribution of the Dakshina or money to the officiating priest.

Far from being a fast day, the holiday is observed by all classes of Hindus as a festival, when different kinds of sweetmeats are prepared and eaten, and everyone rejoices at the approaching close of the rainy season, which virtually commences from this day. The Hindus are clad in their best attire, and in the evening visit the seashore near Chaupati, the Kennedy Sea Face, Mody Bay, and other places to offer cocoanuts to the God Varun, or Neptune. A large fair is also held in the evening on the Esplanade along Cruickshank Road, and all classes of Hindus, besides other people, such as Parsis and Mahomedans, visit the fair. Extra tram cars run from different parts of

the city, and the police have plenty of work in controlling the vehicular and other traffic on the occasion of this great national holiday.

In Poona it is customary on this day with the leading Hindus to go in a procession, accompanied with a band and other native music, to the Sangam, or junction of the Mula and Mutta rivers. A chariot drawn by four horses accompanies the procession with a cocoanut placed in it to be thrown into the water where the two rivers meet.

JANMA AND GOKUL ASHTAMI HOLIDAYS.

These holidays are celebrated in commemoration of the birth of Krishna, the 8th incarnation of Vishnu, on the 8th day of the dark-half of the month of Shravan.

When Kans, the King of Mathura, and the brother of Devki, through fear of being killed by one of his own family, had murdered successively six sons born to Vasudev, Vishnu besought Anant or Seshnarayan to incarnate himself along with him as Balaram or Balibhadra, and Shrikrishna. At first Lakshminarayen expressed his unwillingness to again undergo all the troubles incidental to incarnation, as he had suffered much during his former birth as Lakshman, the younger brother of Ramchandra, the 7th incarnation of Vishnu, but on the latter's urgent solicitation he consented to do so, as his elder brother, and was thereupon born to Rohini, another wife of Vasudev, who had fled from Mathura to Gokul, and been sheltered by Nand, the rich and hospitable cowherd and the reputed father of Krishna.

When Krishna was born at Mathura, Vasudev stealthily removed him to Gokul, and placing the new-born infant in the room of a female child simultaneously begotten by Yeshoda, the wife of Nand, brought it to his own prison, and Kans, after unsuccessfully trying to kill it, was warned by a voice from heaven that his mortal enemy was growing into boyhood at Gokul.

The birth of Krishna is celebrated at midnight on the Janma Ashtami day in different Hindu temples, where a Hardas or religious preacher narrates the history of the events immediately preceding the birth of this eighth incarnation of Vishnu, and exactly as the clock strikes twelve, the whole assembly throw up gulal powder (flour of bajri (*Holcus spicatus*) dyed with a decoction of red sandalwood) mixed with flowers, and offer their devotion to the deity in whose honour the temple is built.

Pious Hindus observe the birthday of Krishna as a fast, and at night worship an image of Krishna, adorning it with one thousand leaves of the sacred tulsi or basil (*Ocymum sanctum*) and other flowers. The maths or temples dedicated to Kanhoba are also visited by Hindus in large numbers to witness the dancing and singing of the Bhagats or votaries of the deity. The fifth day from

the birth of Krishna is also celebrated in the maths in the presence of numerous spectators who are presented with sweetmeats at the conclusion of the ceremony.

The Gokul Ashtami holiday is a day of great rejoicing with the gaulis or keepers of cattle, in grateful remembrance of Shrikrishna having been bred up among their community. A number of them form themselves into a company and go about the town shouting the words, "Govinda, Gopala, Narayan, Hari"; they are then presented with a pot of curds which they throw on their bodies. They are known by the term Gopals or protectors of cows.

Among the deeds of heroism and merit performed by Krishna stand prominent the following :—The killing of Kans, and two powerful giants, Mushtik and Chanur; the liberation of his parents from their incarceration; the defeat of Jarasand, the father-in-law of Kans, seventeen times on the battle-field; the burning to ashes of Kal Yavan, the illegitimate son of Gargacharya, by the hands of the celebrated Muni, Muchakund; the assassination of Bhaumasur, the powerful king of Pragjotishpur; the assistance rendered to Arjun as his charioteer during the great war between the Pandavas and the Kauravas; the building of his favourite city Dwarka; the

slaying of the venomous snake Kalai, frequenting the waters of the Jamna; the successful wooing of his favourite wife Rukhmini, after the punishment of all the rival princes; and, last but not least, his exemplary advice to Arjun on the Kuru Kshetra, the scene of the great Mahabharat war embodied in the immortal Bhagvat Gita or Song Celestial, the beauties of which are rendered patent to the whole admiring intellectual world by the labours of Dnyaneshwar, Vaman Pandit, and Vishnu Bawa Bramhachari in their respective works, known as the Dnyaneshwari, the Yatharth Dipika, and the Setubandhini Tika in Marathi, and by a Thomson, a Telang, and an Arnold in English.

The birth of Shrikrishna was signalised by the rising of the Rohini Nakshatra, the fourth lunar mansion, and the day of his birth is also known among the Hindus as Buddhashtami.

PITHORI AMAVASIA HOLIDAY.

This holiday falls on the 30th of the month of Shravan, and is sacred to the worship of the sixty-four Yoginis, or female attendants of the goddess Durga. They are worshipped by women who lose their children in infancy. They fast this day and worship in the evening an image of Pithori or Prachi, one of the goddesses of the East, offering it various kinds of fruits and flowers, when a Brahman priest sometimes officiates at the ceremony. A number of sweetmeats are prepared on this day by Hindu ladies, and are distributed among the members of the family by an elderly woman in the form of *vanen*. Gujarati Hindus go to Walkeshwar with their families the previous evening and remain in the Dharmashalas for the night, and the next morning they bathe in the tank called Banganga. A large fair is held in the vicinity of the temple in celebration of this holiday.

Once upon a time Indrani went to Kailás, the residence of Shankar, and besought his wife Parvati to favor her with an account of the Pithori Vrat, the observance of which was considered meritorious and had the effect of

saving the lives of children in their infancy born to those women who observed it, and Durga was pleased to narrate the following history :—

There lived in former times a wealthy Brahman named Shridhar, whose wife Sumitra was well known for her virtue. She had eight sons, the eldest of whom was called Shankar, who was married to a beautiful woman, named Videha. This lady used to give birth every year to a child in the month of Shravan on the day of the anniversary of her grand-father-in-law, and after a time she had the misfortune to lose such child. All means were tried to avert this annually recurring calamity, but they proved abortive, and her mother-in-law was disgusted with her and turned her out of the house with her new-born child. She was at a loss to know what to do at such a critical time, but taking the name of God, and having firm faith in His mercy, she started on her perilous journey without anybody to guide her on her way, and went into a deep wilderness. It was the rainy season, and in the midst of thunder and lightning and showers of rain she with great difficulty reached the banks of a river where there was a hermitage, the head of which was a woman named Pramada. The latter was surprised to see such a beautiful woman with a new-born child in her

arms approach the hermitage and asked her who she was and what had brought her into the wilderness. Videha then told her that she belonged to a Brahman family, and was the wife of Shankar, but as she gave birth every year to a child on the day of her grand-father-in-law's anniversary, and her child shortly afterwards died, she was turned out that day from her mother-in-law's house with her new-born child, and she had therefore no other course left but to seek the wilderness. The head of the hermitage pitied her circumstances and said that that day was the 30th of the month of Shravan, when the sixty-four Yoginis would visit the hermitage in the evening with the object of worshipping the goddess of the hermitage, and they would be the means of saving her children, and she asked Videha to conceal herself in a heap of the leaves of the Bel tree (*Ægle marmelos*). She did as desired, and in the evening the sixty-four Yoginis visited the hermitage for the purpose of worshipping the goddess, and, after the whole ceremony was over, inquired, in a loud voice, if any Atithi (*i.e.*, a person dropping in at the meal hour) was present there, when Videha came out of the heap of the leaves and stood before them, and in a supplicating mood said that she was a Brahman lady present there as a helpless stranger, but was unclean that day on account of the death of her new-born child, and

besought them to grant her prayer by sparing the lives of her children. She was then ordered to eat the naivedya, or the offering of sweetmeats made to the goddess in connection with the ceremony performed by them that evening, and they assured her that by their blessing she would give birth to eight sons, who would be distinguished for their learning, meakness, and filial devotion, and live a long life; that she herself would enjoy all earthly happiness, and ultimately be a denizen of heaven. She then returned home greatly delighted at the prospect of enjoying better days at her husband's house, and gave an account of her adventurous journey to her relatives. In due time the prophetic blessing of the Yoginis was verified, and Videha, in grateful remembrance of the favour done to her by them, regularly observed the Pithori Vrat every year on the last day of the month of Shravan.

GANESH CHATURTHI

This Hindu holiday is sacred to Ganesh, the personification of wisdom and one of the Hindu Trinity, consisting of Shanker the father, Gajanan the son, and Shadanan the holy celebate or Bramhachari. The origin of this festival goes back to remote antiquity. It is stated in one of the Purans that Gajasur, a mighty demon, having troubled the gods, Rishis and Brahmans, and having boasted that none but an elephant-headed person could kill him, a deputation of the persecuted denizens of heaven waited upon Shankar to say that they would be glad to see Gajasur killed, and implored Shankar's assistance. Shankar was pleased to promise the necessary help, and said that Vishnu would soon incarnate himself as Gajanan in the womb of Parvati to fulfil their desire. In due time Parvati gave birth to Gajanan, who is represented as an elephant-headed deity with one tooth, a large forehead, four hands, and a long belly. In the upper right hand he holds a hook to drive an elephant, and in the left an axe or hatchet. The lower right hand is held erect or in a blessing position, and the left holds a lotus or a silver ball.

After his thread ceremony he was married to the eight Siddhis, the daughters of Brahma, the creator of the world. He then prepared himself to fight with Gajasur, with the assistance of Shadanan and a large army which was put under his brother as Commander-in-chief. Ganesh, the lord of hosts, rode on his favourite animal, the mouse, and gave battle to Gajasur, who, though more than a match for Skand, the younger brother, was ultimately killed by Ganesh with the axe and the hook above referred to carried by him. He was rewarded by the denizens of paradise with the usual shower of flowers and worshipped as a God. This battle took place on the fourth day of the light half of Bhadrapad, and hence arose its sanctity. Dharm also worshipped Ganesh at the commencement of the war described in the Mahabharat.

Early in the morning the Hindus have a bath, and the ladies and children put on ornaments and rich clothes. The head of the family or, if he is a widower, one of his sons performs the worship with all the sixteen formalities, such as *avahan*, &c., which are known as Shodashopechar, and take full two hours of the officiating priest's valuable time. He is then presented with the *dakshana* and ten *modaks* or balls out of the nivedya, offered to the deity, consisting of twenty-one

balls, one of which is put before the god, and the remaining ten are eaten by the family members. Among the offerings of leaves and flowers made to Ganpati, Durvas (*Agrostis linearis*) are held particularly sacred. This festival nowadays lasts for eleven days. On the last day is held the Uttarpuja, or valedictory ceremony, when special blessings for the welfare of the family are invoked by all members. Some persons keep Gunpati for two days, some five days, others keep the deity for seven, ten, or eleven days, according to their taste, convenience, or opportunities. The *arti* or ceremony of waving a platter containing a burning lamp round the image, and that of *Mantrapushpanjali* or offering rice and flowers, are observed on all the days the festival is kept up, and are the occasion when friends and relations of the family are invited to attend. Some well-to-do people ask a Brahman *hardas* to deliver a Kirtan in honour of Ganesh.

The image of Ganesh sanctioned in the Purans is that of gold or of silver or of clay, and hence plaster of Paris images are condemned and do not command a ready sale as clay images do. In Bombay the usual place where Ganpatis are sold is Gulalwadi, close to the residence of our well-known townsman and philanthropist, Mr. Chhabildas Lallubhai.

Both on the night previous, and the first day of the festival, Gulalwadi presents a very busy scene. Thousands of Ganpatis are placed on temporary stalls erected in the shops of the various dealers who carry on their trade in this locality, and a number of persons dealing in camphor, handkerchiefs, tinsel work, etc., do a profitable business. The final resting place of the Ganpatis in Bombay is Back Bay.

Ganpati being looked upon as a *Mangal daiwat*, or fortunate deity, no ceremony of a religious character is held without the repetition of the well-known words "Shri Ganesh ayanamaha." He being the destroyer of enemies, and remover of all obstacles in one's way of earthly success, is regarded with the greatest reverence by the Hindus. His blessings are invoked, in the above words, at the commencement of one's education. He is also the giver of fortune, and the averter of such dire calamities as war, famine, and pestilence. Traders if they wish to succeed must as a rule invoke his blessing. He is also the deity that blesses mankind with children, and all earthly good and prosperity, and is the restorer of peace between husband and wife, and the helper of the agriculturist.

For the last few years the Ganpati *melas* or gatherings have become an annual institution among the Hindus. Bombay has in this

respect followed the example of Poona, which has this year (1900) not been able to keep up this festival with the same zeal and *eclat* that were its distinguishing features in previous years. One thing which some of the Hindu well-to-do people do not like is the admission of boys of a tender age to these gatherings, which being necessarily held at nights, are a great strain on their health and strength.

THE GAURI HOLIDAYS.

These holidays are observed by Hindus on the third day after the Ganesh Chaturthi festival, and last for three days. They are sacred to Gauri or Parvati, the wife of Shankar and the mother of Gunpati. Early in the morning Hindu houses are cleansed and cowdunged, and a large quantity of sandalwood is kept ready in the front verandah, where the goddess is first worshipped, and small footmarks of the goddess are made along the passages through which she is taken round the house by a girl before she is made to sit at the place made ready for her.

The ceremony of worshipping the goddess commences at four o'clock in the evening, when an elderly married lady asks a girl to sit on the wooden *pat* or seat placed on the sandalwood enclosure made in the front verandah. After the goddess has been worshipped there she is taken over all parts of the house through a particular passage marked with sandalwood, and *arti* is made in her honour in each room. The goddess in the initial ceremony consists of seven *terda* plants (common balsam, *Inpatiens balsamina*) covered with a silk *patal* or female garment and a *choli* or bodice. The girl who takes the goddess round the house is presented

with a round piece of plantain each time the *arti* is waived round the goddess, by way of sweetening her mouth and offering her a hearty welcome, for Parvati is looked upon as entering her paternal house at this time every year.

In the evening the ladies make an elaborate figure of Gauri with the help of linen, pieces of plantain stalk, and a printed paper-head of the goddess, and they deck it with all the ornaments of which a Hindu lady is proverbially fond. These consist of head-ornaments, nose and ear rings, armlets, wristlets and necklets, too numerous to be mentioned, and when the goddess is thus laden and covered from top to toe with ornaments, which are generally made of brass, covered with gold-leaf, she is supposed to be mightily pleased, and to bless the ladies with all earthly good and prosperity. Hence a woman whose husband or parents have made similar gold ornaments for her is said to be decked as a Gauri, and is an object of envy to her less fortunate sisters.

During the Gauri holidays different sweetmeats are prepared by the ladies of the house and offered to the goddess after *puja* and *arti* have been performed. The bright yellow flowers of the Bhendi tree (*Hibiscus populneus*) are in great request, as they are particularly acceptable to the goddess during these holidays. Female friends and relations are invited

to see the goddess thus decked in her best attire, and the place where she sits is ablaze with lights. The domestic servants of the Hindus, who are generally of the Maratha caste, also enjoy these holidays to their heart's content. For about a month before, after the work of the day is over, they undergo daily training, when they are made to dance and sing in a ring in the centre whereof sits their leader with a drum, to whose beating the leader begins the singing and is followed by the members of the ring in chorus. As a class these Hindu servants are illiterate, but one is surprised to find how, with a short training, they are able to sing their peculiar songs in praise of the gods and goddesses, to the great amusement and delight of those who hear and understand them.

During the Gauri holidays, although the masters are put to considerable inconvenience at night, they do not or dare not find fault with their servants who clad in their new and gaudy attire, consisting of Maratha turbans, *bundies* and *dhoturs*, go from house to house to make an exhibition of their peculiar singing and dancing, and after their performance is over demand a money present of their masters, which, when collected, goes to a general servants' fund, which is spent on a feast soon after the termination of the holidays.

The last or third day of the Gauris is observed by the servants with the greatest hilarity. Under the influence of country liquor they become quite merry, and unfortunately their songs and gestures are not over delicate.

The Gauris also are taken to Back Bay, their final resting-place, either simply or along with Ganpatis in long processions. These processions are accompanied by bands and other music and present a lively scene all over the Thakurdwar and Charni Roads, and crossing the railway near the station they mingle in one surging mass of humanity, which the police of Bombay manage with great tact and patience to keep in order.

VAMAN DWADASHI.

The Vaman Dwadashi, which falls on the 12th of the month of Bhadrapad, is sacred to Vaman, the 5th incarnation of Vishnu. He is represented as a dwarf in the garb of a Bramhachari or Batu. He was born to Kashyap Rishi by his wife Aditi, a great *tapaswin*, and well known for her virtue. In former times there lived a mighty *daitya*, named Bali, the son of Virochan. Notwithstanding the fact of his being born a demon, Bali was a great devotee of Vishnu, and having thus become his favourite on earth began to trouble the gods, whereupon the latter waited in a body on Seshnarayen, and implored his assistance in freeing them from their trouble. Vishnu was at a loss as to what he should do. On the one hand he had to please the gods, and on the other he had to deprive his favourite devotee of his kingdom, but at the earnest entreaties of the denizens of heaven he was induced to take up the cause of the gods. For this purpose, assuming the disguise of a mendicant Brahmin, Vaman approached the residence of Bali, who on seeing him rose up from his seat, and offered it to his honoured guest.

After the usual rites of hospitality were gone through, Bali with folded hands and in a supplicating mood begged to know the object of his guest's visit. Vaman said that he was in need of *tripadbhumi*, or ground which he could compass by three steps, as he was about to study the Vedas. Being a mendicant he had no place which he could consider his own, and hence the request which he was sure it would not be difficult for his generous host to grant. He did not care for any other charity, such as money, a kingdom, an elephant, or a horse chariot, for all these were luxuries which men of means only could safely indulge in.

Bali, in his zeal to help the helpless and succour the needy, could not fathom the motive of the mendicant Brahmin in asking the above charity, and without a moment's reflection said to the dwarf that after all it was a very small request to make on his part, especially as the donor in this instance was in a position to comply with a far greater request, if only it was made to him in sincerity. So saying Bali called his Guru Shukracharya to assist him in making the formal gift. Shukracharya was too shrewd a gentleman to be duped by the persuasive speech of the dwarf, and he plainly told Bali that the mendicant was a peacock in borrowed plumes. He even hinted that the impostor was nobody but the

great Vishnu or Murari, who had come there to expose the cause of Indra and the other gods, and that the charity which Bali was about to make was misplaced as the object of it was totally unworthy, and was sure to work his own ruin. The moment the gift was made the impostor would hurl him down into Patal or the lower regions. Bali said that although what Shukracharya had predicted might happen, he on his part was not prepared to recede from his promise. It was not in his nature to say *no* to anybody, and especially a person asking for an insignificant piece of ground as a charity and for a laudable object. If what Shukracharya said was true, nothing could be more meritorious than making a gift to Hari in the garb of a mendicant.

Nothing now remained to complete the gift except the pouring of water on the hand of the disguised Vaman, and for that purpose Bali took a large *jhari* or long-necked vessel into his hand, and was about to pour the water from the vessel, when as a last resort his guru assumed a diminutive size, and seated himself in the neck of the vessel in order to prevent the water from coming out. Bali seeing the passage of the neck blocked up, thrust a small reed into it to remove the obstacle, and in so doing broke one of the eyes of Shukracharya, who thereupon quietly came out of the vessel,

gaining nothing in the bargain, but losing the use of the eye so struck by the reed. Bali then poured the water from the *jhari* on the hand of Vaman as evidencing the completion of the promised gift.

Vaman then assumed a gigantic form, and with one step compassed the whole earth, and at the suggestion of Bali compassed the heavenly regions with the other step, and having accomplished the latter feat again asked Bali where he should put the third step. Nothing daunted Bali told Vaman to put it on his head and the latter having done so hurled the daitya into the lower regions. Bali was, however, rewarded by Vaman for his exemplary magnanimity by the constant attendance on the part of the great Vishnu in the form of Vaman at the house of his great devotee as his gatekeeper. This was no humiliation to Vishnu, but was purposely done to bless Bali with Vaman's daily *durshan*, which was the result of extraordinary merit alone.

ANANT CHATURDASHI.

This day, which falls on the 14th of Bhadrapad, is sacred to the worship of Anant, meaning the endless, one of the names of Seshshai or Seshnarayan, the second of the Hindu Trinity, consisting of Brahma, Vishnu, and Mahesh. The head of the family and his wife, who perform the worship, observe a fast in the morning, and in the evening at about 5 o'clock worship Anant with the assistance of the family priest. A square wooden stool called *chaurang* is placed in a part of the house, and in the centre is placed a pot full of water representing the holy Ganges, with a little milk mixed with it, and a betel-nut and a silver coin are also put into the pot. Over the pot is placed a dish or platter, and in the centre an image of Sesh made of the Darbha grass (*Poa cynosurides*). The Sesh or serpent is emblematic of Seshnarayan, who rests on the seven-hooded serpent, his favourite animal.

The number 14 plays an important part in the worship of Anant. Fourteen different kinds of leaves and fruits are offered to the god, as also fourteen different sweetmeats are made in honour of him. The chief of these are *khir*, made of rice, milk, sugar, and spices, and *puris*, a kind of light raised bread. Among the offerings of leaves and flowers

stand pre-eminent the Kevda (*Pandanus odorantissimus*) and Tulsi (Holy basil, *Ocymum sanctum*), of which one thousand leaves are offered. Well-to-do Hindus invite their close relatives for supper this day. Along with Anant is worshipped an Anant Dora made of gold lace and red silk, which is bought in the market, and costs the purchaser from one to three rupees. After it is worshipped it is tied round the elbow, and some Hindus keep it on for the whole year, when it is replaced by a new one. It is considered highly meritorious to preserve it carefully, and very sinful to put it in an objectionable place, or consign it to the flames.

The worship of Anant is regarded as one calculated to restore the worshipper to his lost power, fortune, or kingdom. The Pandavs in their long wanderings from place to place, extending over a period of twelve years, and full of trouble, trials, and anxiety, once asked Krishna what they should do to regain their kingdom. Krishna recommended them to worship Anant, and as a precedent for such worship, gave the following account of the worship pertaining to this day.

There lived in the Krit Yuga a Brahman, named Sumantu, of the Vasishta Gotra, who married Diksha, the daughter of Bhrigu Rishi. They had a daughter named Sushila, a chaste

and liberal-minded woman. In the course of time Sumantu lost his wife Diksha, and married another woman named Karkasha, who was given to all sorts of objectionable conduct and to quarelling with her husband and step-daughter. As soon as Sushila reached nubile age, the father thought of giving her in marriage to one who could be worthy of accepting the hand of such a well-behaved girl. One day Kaundinya Rishi happened to come to the house of Sumantu, and the father of the girl, thinking that he would prove a worthy husband, proposed to give him Sushila in marriage with her consent. The marriage was thereupon duly solemnized, and the daughter and her husband remained for two months at the house of Sumantu. The time for separation came, and Sumantu was grieved at the prospect of losing the company of such a worthy pair as Kaundinya and Sushila, especially as he had to put up with the vagaries and impudence of his quarrelsome second wife Karkasha. At the earnest entreaties of Sumantu, Kaundinya stayed for thirteen days more, telling his father-in-law at the same time that two *tápasis* or ascetics should not live in the same house.

At the time of departure, Sumantu asked his wife to give his daughter and son-in-law a sumptuous parting dinner. Karkasha with

her usual obstinacy, instead of giving them any dinner, closed the door of the house against them. They then took leave of Sumantu, and sitting in a chariot went to the banks of a river where a number of married women clad in rich red silk attire were engaged in observing the Anant Chaturdashivrat. Sushila also joined them in worshipping Anant. On the return of the Rishi from his Anushtan at the banks of the river, they again drove the chariot onwards, and reached the city, named Amaravati, and to their surprise found the citizens coming to them in a body to welcome them as their masters.

Kaundinya and Sushila were thus rewarded with fortune and sovereign power by means of the merit acquired by the observance of this vrat. One day Kaundinya happened to see the Anant Dora put by Sushila on her person and asked her what it was, and thinking that it was intended as a charm was very angry with his wife, and although she tried her best to convince him that it was no charm but the worshipped Anant who was instrumental in blessing him with his immense fortune, he disbelieved her, and had the rashness to remove it from her body and threw it into the fire. Sushila immediately ran up to the fire, and uttering the expressive words, "Oh! Anant, I am undone," removed it from the fire, and worshipped it.

The conduct of the husband soon made him a beggar. He lost his kingdom, fortune and everything else which he could call his own. Repenting of his folly, he again went into the wilderness and vowed that until he saw Lakshmi Narayan bodily, he would not touch any food or water. So saying both went in search of Anant, who ultimately manifested himself in his real form, and again restored them to their former power.

HINDU ANNIVERSARY DAYS.

The anniversary days among the Hindus are known by the name of Pitri Paksha, and begin on the 15th of the month of Bhadrapad, and end on the 30th, or Amavasya of that month. They are sacred to the worship of the departed spirits of the Hindu Ancestors. Generally the anniversary or *Shraddha* ceremony is held on the day of the death of the father of the person who performs it. Among the Romans the 19th of February was the day sacred to the *Manes* of the dead. They used to dig a large pit on one of the hills of their city, where offerings called *inferiæ* were made to the departed souls who were said to live under the earth under the guardianship of Mania. The Romans called the festival by the name of Feralia or Parentalia. It was held as an unlucky day for marriage or business.

Among the Hindus also no *Munj* or marriage ceremonies are held during these days. The marriage season among them begins in the month of Magsar and ends with Jesht. The Tulsi marriage, which takes place in Kartik, precedes the season for marriages among the Hindus. According to the

Shastras there are ninety-six Shraddhas prescribed during the whole year, but the Pitri Paksha is the chief of them all. On the day of the Shraddha the head of the family who performs the ceremony observes a fast, which is broken after it is performed.

If a Hindu loses his mother during the life-time of his father he performs his mother's Shräddha on the 9th day of the dark half of Bhadrapad which is called Ainavmi. This ceremony, which takes about an hour, consists of the offering of three balls of cooked fine rice in the following order :—The first ball is offered to the deceased mother, the next ball which is placed close to the first in the same line higher up is offered to the paternal grandmother; but if the grandmother happens to be alive, the second ball is offered to the great grandmother, and the third ball is offered to the great grandmother.

The following is the ceremony observed by the head of the family on the anniversary of his father. He sits on a *dhabal* or a kind of woollen cloth, facing the South, and puts over the shoulder a strip of silk cloth stamped with sacred names, called *uttari*. It is about an inch in width, and of the length of the sacred thread put on when the Munj ceremony is performed. Near the performer sits the officiating family priest, and having handed over a

darbha to be tied by his Yajaman to his hair, and a similar one to be placed on the woollen cloth upon which he sits, and a ring of the same grass (*Poa cynosurides*) to be put on his fourth finger, and a similar grass to be tied to the sacred thread and *uttari* described above, the officiating priest begins the ceremony. This is done by arranging in front of the performer five plantain leaf squares on which are placed the *darbha* grass and a copper pice and other things ; these squares represent the spirits of the dead ancestors in the following order. First come the manes of the father, the grandfather, and the great grandfather who are invoked on the first square to the left hand of the performer ; then on the square next in order on the right come the manes of the mother, the grandmother, and the great grandmother of the performer. On the square next in order to the right of the second, comes the spirit of the deceased wife of the performer, and on the fourth square to the right in the same line, come the spirits of the deceased brother of the Yajaman or of his uncle and other pitras or ancestors.

A little below the above four squares to the left is placed another square plantain leaf on which is placed a Vishnupad, or copper-plate representing the foot of the great preserver of the world. This copper-plate has several

sacred symbols engraved upon it emblematic of Vishnu. Opposite to the square on which the Vishnupad is placed, are put on the right-hand of the performer two other squares on which are invoked the Vishvadevs who are two in number and reside in Swarga.

After the invocation of the manes and gods is over they are worshipped, and similar squares of plantain leaves are made on which the food prepared by the Brahmin cook specially engaged for the occasion is placed. The chief of these sweetmeats consists of *Khir-puri*, a favourite dish of the gods and the manes. When the food for the divine and departed spirits is thus placed, three big balls of the size of an ordinary cocoanut are offered to the departed ancestors in the following order. In the centre of the above squares a vacant space is left, where in front of the performer is offered the first ball to the spirit of the deceased father, and close to it in the same line higher up is offered the second ball to the deceased grandfather, and a third ball still higher up in the same line is offered to the deceased great grandfather. The balls are placed on a few pieces of the *Darbha* grass whereon are placed a few leaves of the Agasti tree (*Aeschynomene grandiflora*) and over these leaves is placed the Vishnupad above referred to, and over this copper-plate the big balls are put.

On the right of the above balls are offered several smaller ones, also of rice of the size of an egg. These are emblematic of the deceased ancestors on the father's side, and on the left are offered similar balls to the deceased ancestors of the Yajaman on the mother's side. Five other balls called *dharmapindas* are also offered to the manes of those who died childless, and such as according to the Shastras are gone into perdition. All of them are then worshipped and *arti* of cotton wicks mixed with ghee is waved round them, and the *Mantra-pushpanjali* is then made, and all the members of the family, both male as well as female, bow down their heads with folded hands in honor of the deceased ancestors.

The last ceremony is that connected with the god *Agni* who is worshipped in due form. A copper pot called *kaul* is placed to the left of the performer, wherein fire is put, and after it is duly honored, a *nivedya* is then taken out of the house by the performer, and put in the open air on the ground to be eaten up by a crow. This act of feasting the crow is very anxiously watched by all the members of the family, as the speedy touch of the food by the crow is looked upon as a satisfactory termination of the ceremony, which is highly pleasing both to the gods and the departed ancestors, who bless the performer superabundantly,

and in the event of the ceremony being neglected by the person whose duty and privilege it is to gain merit by its performance, the dissatisfied spirits curse their descendant on the earth for his undutiful conduct, which is regarded as base ingratitude.

In addition to the leaves and flowers of the Ágasti tree above spoken of, the leaves of tula, maka (*Eclypta prostrata*), the lotus, black tila (*Sesamum*) and barley are particularly acceptable. Once at least in a man's life the ceremony performed at Gaya on the confluence of the Ganges, the Jumna and the Falgu, is considered highly meritorious.

In the absence of a Shraddha a shorter ceremony called Tarpan is performed, which dispenses with the offering of the rice balls, but consists of what is called Tilanjali, or a handful of sesamum seed in water poured out to the manes.

THE NAVARATRA FESTIVAL.

This festival, which consists of nine days and nights, begins on the 1st of Ashvin and ends on the 9th of the same month. It is called Sharad or Sharadiya Navaratra, and is sacred to the worship of the goddess Bhagvati or Parvati. Such of the Hindus as have got among their penates or household gods the images of Vyankatesh, or of the Hindu trinity, consisting of Khanderao, Bhairi, and Bhavani, also celebrate this festival for nine days.

Generally all temples dedicated to the worship of some Hindu goddess, such as Mumbadevi, Mahalaxmi, Jogeshwari, etc., celebrate this festival in honour of the particular goddess whose name the temple bears. The same is the case with the temples where Vyankatesh or Vishnu is the presiding deity. For nine days regularly a *kirtan* or *katha* is delivered by a paid Brahmin Hardas at night, which takes about three hours in such temples, and pious Hindus make it a point to attend such *kirtans* every night until the festival lasts.

The oldest and most frequented temples in Bombay where this festival is annually celebrated are the Mumbadevi and Mahalaxmi temples. From the early hours in the morning until midnight these temples are crowded with visitors for the purpose of taking the *darshan* of the goddess, which is regarded as highly meritorious, especially on Tuesdays and Fridays, which are held particularly sacred to these goddesses.

From different parts of the native town are seen men as well as women and children in their holiday attire frequenting these well-known temples with offerings, consisting of *pan-supari*, orange roses, *ghee*, a cocoanut, and a copper coin. The *ghee* is intended to feed a lamp kept burning day and night during these days in the temple. A large fair is held at Mahaluxmi Hill in honour of the goddess. A similar fair is also held at Mumbadevi, Marwadi Bazaar, on the tenth day of the month known as Dasra holiday or *Vijaya Dashmi*.

Some well-to-do Hindus invite their friends and relatives for the *pancharti* and *kirtan* held in honour of the festival at their houses. It is also customary where Bhagvati is worshipped to engage the services of *gondhalis*, a class of musicians and singers, to make a *gondhal*, which consists of songs, accompanied with instrumental music, in honour of Bhagwati. A fixed

fee a rupee and four annas is paid to these professional singers for each *gondhal* they are asked to make. *Murlis*, or females dedicated to the god Khandoba, are also engaged to sing the praises of their patron deity during this festival. Jejuri near Poona is noted for the celebrated shrine of Khanderao, Bhairi and Bhavani or Mahalsa, where also this festival is celebrated with great zeal and *eclat*. Tuljapur, famous for its temple of Amba Bhavani, is also visited by a large concourse of devotees in these days.

During this festival it is customary among high class Hindu ladies to invite their female relatives and friends for receiving *halad-kunku* (turmeric-powder and the coloured powder prepared from it, called *kunku*). This ceremony is specially acceptable to married women whose husbands are alive and who are known as *suvasins*. Along with *hulad-kunku*, the invited female guests are presented with a number of other things such as betel-leaves, plantains, cocoanuts, flowers, *bhurangulis* (rice soaked and puffed out), sugar-candy, *chandlas* or ornamental round pieces of tinsel work worn on the forehead, new copper-coins, and some fragrant oil.

The god and goddesses who are worshipped during this festival are said to rest on the pot employed in the ceremony for nine successive

days without moving, and it is on the tenth or Dasra day that they are again moved from their fixed position. *Havans* or oblations by fire are also made in honour of the gods and goddesses during these days.

A number of women of the Vadval caste hailing from the Mahim woods, as well as Wagri women hailing from Guzerat, are seen visiting the houses of well-to-do Hindus to beg for alms in the name of the goddess Bhawani, and the latter class of women sing a number of Guzerati songs in honour of the festival and in praise of Bhavani every morning during the Navratra holidays.

DASRA HOLIDAY.

Dasra or Vijaya Dashmi falls on the 10th day of Ashvin and is one of the greatest and most popular of the Hindu holidays throughout the year. It is looked upon as a very auspicious day. Maheshasur, a buffalo-headed demon, was killed by the goddess Durga on this day, and hence it is also called Durgotsava. On this day Ram, the eighth incarnation of Vishnu, marched against Ravan, the ruler of Lanka or Ceylon. The Pandavas also selected this day as an auspicious one for making preparations for war with their paternal cousins the Kauravas.

All the gods and goddesses, who are made to sit unmoved for nine days previous to this festival, are in the morning moved from their fixed position and reworshipped on this day. In the case of Kanderao, Bhairi and Bhavani, a *tali* ceremony is held, which consists of putting before the deities a dish in which is placed sugarcandy weighing one and a quarter seers. In the centre of the dish are placed five cocoanuts, and round the dish on a wooden *pat* are placed five groups of betel-leaves, plantains, almonds, and dry dates. After putting a little quantity of *bhandar* or turmeric powder over

the gods and the cocoanuts, the dish is thrice lifted up from the *pat* in honour of Khanderao, and each time the dish is lifted up the words "Yelkot, Yelkot, Changbhali," are uttered by the family members who join in lifting up the dish and placing it again on the *pat*. After this ceremony is over, the central cocoanut and the almonds and dry dates and sugarcandy are broken and mixed together and distributed as a *prasad* or gift from the god.

In the case of those who worship Vyankatesh for the previous nine days of the Navratra festival, a similar *prasad* with a few variations is presented to the members of the family and a few relatives and friends who are invited in the evening for the final *pancharti* in honour of the god.

In the case of the temples dedicated to the various female goddesses such as Mumbadevi and Mahaluxmi, they are again visited on this day as on the previous nine days for *darshan*. Well-to-do Hindus go in their own carriages or hired carriages on a visit to the Mahalaxmi temple with the members of their families and children, and on their return do not forget to visit the old and imposing structure close to the Mahaluxmi shrine, known by the name of Dhakji's temple. It is built on an elevated piece of rocky ground, and it is seen at a considerable distance from Bombay.

A Pathare Prabhu of former times, who was in the service of His Highness the Gaekwar, built it at a considerable cost, and by its architectural beauty made it one of the prominent buildings of Bombay. There is an inscription on a marble tablet placed in the Temple, which is as follows :—"The erection of this Sacred Pagoda and charity houses adjoining commenced in the month of February in the year 1830, was completed and consecrated to the five principal Hindu divinities named Shri Mayureshwar, Shri Rameshwari, Shri Dhakleshwar, Shri Hari Narayan, and Shri Vinayakaditya in May 1832, when the Earl of Clare was Governor and Sir Henry Compton, Kt., Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in the Island of Bombay, by Dhakji Dadaji Prabhu of this place. To all be it known that the erection is for charitable uses in the manner prescribed in the Hindu law, and is to be under the management and protection of his heirs for ever."

After the return of the party from visiting the temples, a sumptuous dinner is eaten by the family members. *Shingdis*, *guravlis*, *sakharbhat* or *khishribhat*, and other sweetmeats are prepared on this day. In the evening the *darshan* of the Shami tree (*Mimosa suma*) is taken. The worship of this tree on this day is due to the fact that the Pandavas after their

wanderings extending over a period of twelve years remained *incognito* for one more year at the house of Virat, and on this day removed their implements of war from the Shami tree wherein they had concealed them. In former times a tree of this kind near the Mumbadevi temple was and is still visited by the Hindus in large numbers, and the same is the case now with a tree within the precincts of the Madhav Bag, close to the Cawasjee Patel Tank.

Another peculiarity connected with this festival is the presentation of gold in the form of leaves of the Apta or Palas tree (*Butea frondosa*) both to the gods and goddesses and to friends and relatives. It is considered highly respectful on the part of youngsters to offer these gold leaves to their elderly friends and relatives, and falling prostrate before them to take their blessings in return along with similar gold leaves.

This is also an auspicious day to begin one's education, and hence children are sent to primary schools in charge of Brahmin masters, called Pantojis, who are paid a rupee as the entrance fee for each boy so admitted. Well-to-do Hindu parents also on these occasions present a slate, a pencil, an ink-stand, a reed covered with ornamental sealing-wax, and a *modi kitta*, or a piece of larg-

and fine writing, or a letter for scholars to form their hand by, to each of the boys attending the Pantoji's School.

In the evening on the return of the male members and the children to their houses, an *arti* is made by the wife, and her daughters-in-law to the husband and his sons according to their respective seniority, and a money present with gold leaves and a cocoanut is given to the mother and daughters-in-law in return. Thus passes this great national Hindu holiday, which is a prelude to subsequent ones such as Kojagri Pornima and the Divali Festival.

proper time, but Valit having forgotten his friend's advice asked his wife to throw the *pindas* into the river, and, obstinate as she always was, she unfortunately consigned them to a cesspool.

Valit thereupon left his house in disgust, and vowed that until Lakshmi favoured him with her blessings, he would not touch any food. He then went into the wilderness, and clothed himself with the bark of trees and lived on fruit. Proceeding onwards he reached the banks of a river. He stayed there for twenty days, when the day of the full moon of Ashvin came, on which he saw three *nagkanyas* worshipping Lakshmi at night, and preparing themselves to play with dice, and searching for a fourth person to complete the number of players. Their attention was suddenly drawn to this poor man, who on being questioned by them as to the reason of his sitting there alone, narrated the story of his life.

They then asked him to join them in gaming, as that was the surest way of being blessed by Kamala. He said that he was taught to believe that gambling was a vice, but they rebuked him for talking like a *pandit* but acting like a fool, and said that every rule had an exception, and that day was specially set apart out of the whole year for gaming. He was simply to obey them and see the

result. He accordingly sat with them to play with dice, and thrice lost the game and with it all his earthly goods, which consisted of his *pancha*, *kaupin* and *yadnopavit*. It was now midnight, and Lakshmi and Narayen were on their special round to see what fortunate persons on earth were awake and engaged in gaming. They saw the poor Brahmin deprived of everything he could call his own, and thereupon by their blessings turned him into a handsome man and asked the *nagkanyas* to marry him. They consented to do so if *they* won the game, but if he should win it, *he* was at liberty to dispose of them in any manner he liked. The Brahmin thinking that they would be his wives in either of the above events taking place, played with great zeal and energy, and won the game. Thus they became his wives by the *gandharva vivaha*, and accompanied him to his house with all sorts of provisions. Chandini now welcomed him with open arms, for he was a changed man, and by the blessing of *Shripati* he was free from all cares and anxieties in no time.

The food taken on this moonlight night by the Hindus consists of milk and flattened rice called *pohas*, and *puris* and various kinds of *bhajas* made of gram-flour and slices of brinjal, onion, plantain, and other vegetables. They are soaked in oil or butter and fried.

On this memorable day in 1873, in Bombay, the only son of the late Hon'ble Jagannath Shankarshet, named Vinayakrao Jagannath, died at his garden house on the corner of Gowalia Tank Road, after a short illness. It was customary with this family in former times to entertain a number of their friends and relatives by inviting them to a supper party in honour of this holiday. This house does not now exist, but in the palmy days of the Shankarshet family it was the scene of great rejoicing on several festive occasions, and especially on the full moon day of the native month of Margasirsha when the annual fair of the Bhavanishankar Temple, belonging to the family, was celebrated with great *eclat*, and a number of European and native friends were invited to join in a torchlight procession, headed by the commanding figure of the Hon'ble Jagannath Shankarshet, which started from the mansion and slowly wended its way to the terraced building in the compound of the temple premises to witness a grand display of fireworks let off from the opposite fields for the delectation of the assembled guests.

THE DEWALI HOLIDAYS.

The Dewali holidays, which last for five days, take their name from the Sanskrit word Dipavali, meaning a row of lamps. The origin of this festival goes back to remote antiquity. After Bali was hurled by Vaman into the lower regions, the gods were liberated from Bali's prison-house and were taken with Lakshmi to Kshirsagar, where they rested for a long time. Hence this festival is consecrated to the worship of Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity.

This festival is the grandest of all the holidays mentioned in the Hindu Calendar, and is observed with great *eclat* by all people, from the highest to the lowest. Whatever shortcomings the Hindus may be guilty of in ordinary times in matters sanitary, Dewali is an exemplary exception, when the observance of the golden rule that cleanliness is next to godliness is strictly enforced. The cleansing of houses and their whitewashing and illumination are some of the essential characteristics of this holiday.

The first day of the festival is called Dhantrayodashi, which is observed by the Sowcars counting their stores and worshipping their wealth. On this day it is customary among

the Hindus to invite a son-in-law married during the previous year to pass the holiday at his father-in-law's house. Special attention is shown to this fortunate young man during all the days he resides there. He is brought in a carriage, and amidst the rejoicing of his wife's parents and other relations, exhibited by a free display of fireworks and other manifestations of joy. At supper he is provided with a rich silk *pitamber*, asked to enter the dining room and made to sit next to the place occupied by the father-in-law, when a number of sweetmeats are placed before him.

Early in the morning of the next day, which is known as Narak Chaturdashi, memorable for the death of Narkasur at the hands of Vishnu, the Hindus rise and light up their houses, and after rubbing their bodies with perfumed ointment, take a hot water bath in front of their houses. Two welcome visitors frequent Hindu houses during this festival in the morning. One is the Mahomedan dealer in *Dewalino Sakan* (salt), and the other is the Shankhia, who hails from Rahuli, near Malad in Salsette, and pronounces a kind of benediction, followed by the sounding of the conch-shell. The benediction is as follows :—

"Worship the Jogi and enjoy sovereign power. The Jogi attains salvation, and all calamity disappears. May Ram or Raghunath

bless you superabundantly, and may you always be prosperous as Nand and Gokul were by the favour of Pandurang. The conch-shell is sounded, and the cymbals are sounded and the wristlet of Rati Sati (the wife of Kamdev, the Hindu Cupid) is sounded. When the conch-shell is sounded all calamity disappears."

Before the Hindus have their bath in the short hours of the morning during this festival, the servants make it a point to thrice waive round the head of their master and his children a bundle of two or three vegetable substances tied up in a leaf of the castor-oil plant, repeating the expressive words, "Let all misery and troubles go, and the kingdom of Bali come." The third day of the festival falls on the Amwasia, or 30th of the month of Ashwin, which is also the last day of the current Samvat year. It is commonly known by the name of the Pedhipujan, and is sacred to Sarasvati, the goddess of learning and wealth. Merchants close their accounts on this evening, and new account books are bought and worshipped, and servants get a money present from their masters. In the evening of this day sixteen lamps made of the cactus plant are placed on a brass stool in front of the house, and after a time removed by the servants from one house to another.

The servants while so doing very often get a cold water shower from the other servants, who stand waiting for them in a corner of the house compound unseen, to the great merriment of the spectators.

The fourth day is the Bali Pratipada, or 1st of Kirtik Shud, from which begins a new Samvat year, which is 57 years in advance of the Christian year. On this day also, as on the two previous ones, the Hindus leave their beds very early, that is about 3 o'clock in the morning, when the servants clean the whole house, put the accumulated dirt into a basket, and place over it a lighted lamp, and repeating the same words as above, namely, "Let all misery and troubles go, and the kingdom of Bali come," throw it outside. These words are accompanied by the beating of a stick on a sifting fan. After all the members of the family have taken their hot water bath, they put on new clothes, and the oldest lady in the house worships the image of Bali Raja, which is an equestrian one, either of brass or electro-plated, and puts it in front of the house, and surrounds it with lighted lamps, sixteen in number. The placing of the Bali Raja holding in one hand the reins of the horse on which he rides, and in the other a spear, with an umbrella over his head, in front of the house on a brass seat,

and offering it fruits and other gifts, is the signal for the firing of a volley of big and small crackers arranged in a long line with gunpowder and *anar* powder put over them, which at one end contains a miniature castle.

The last day of the Dewali festival is the Bhaubij, which falls on the second of Kartik Shud. Yama the Indian Pluto is said to have visited his sister's house for dinner, and hence it is obligatory on the Hindus to call at their sister's residence for the *arti* ceremony and get a sumptuous dinner, the chief dish of which consists of *Basudi-puri.* The brothers make a money present to their sisters, and the latter present the former with *dhoturs* in return.

The grand illuminations on account of the Dewali are confined to particular localities in Bombay, such as the Marwadi Bazaar, the Lakhmidas Khimji Market, the Mangaldas Market, the Mulji Jaitha Market, the Shivlal Motilal premises on the Kalbadevi Road, the Copper-smith Market, near Bhuleshwar, and the Parsee and Borah Bazaar Streets in the Fort.

FOUR HINDU HOLIDAYS.

Kartik Ekadashi :—On the eleventh day of the first or light half of the month of Kartik is celebrated this great holiday which is sacred to Vishnu. It marks the close of *Chaturmas*, a period of four months, which begins on the eleventh of the month of Ashad. This is a period which pious Hindus employ in reading different religious books, as a daily devotional exercise. Among the Ekadashis, which are observed every fortnight, both the Ashadhi and Kartiki Ekadashis are the most noted. The Ashadhi Ekadashi is also known by the name of Shayani Ekadashi on which day commences the slumber of the god Vishnu, from which he rises on the Kartik Ekadashi. No grain food is touched this day, and it is considered highly meritorious to live on fruits.

Daily *kirtans* are held in the temples during the four months above referred to, and devout Hindus make it a point to attend them every day. A great fair at Matunga is held in honour of this holiday, where from morning to evening the shrine of Vithoba is visited in large numbers by all classes of Hindus clad

in their holiday attire, to take the *Darshan* of the god and offer him garlands of the holy Tulsi (*Ocymum sanctum*). Zaoba's temple on the Girgaum Road, where there are marble shrines of the Hindu triad, consisting of Shri Ram, Lukshuman, and Sita, also presents lively scene in the evening, when the temple is illuminated with gas lights, and a large number of people attend to hear the *kirtan* on the special invitation of the Trustees. No temple in India, however, eclipses the fame of the great shrine of Vithal and Rakhmai at Pandharpur on the banks of the Chandrabhaga and visitors from all parts of the country go on a pilgrimage to this historical town on this holiday.

The next day, which falls on the twelfth of Kartik Shud, is celebrated as the Tulsi marriage day. The union of the holy basil with Krishna, the eighth incarnation of Vishnu, takes place on this day. It is commonly known as "Deva Dewali." Houses are illuminated although not on so grand a scale as in the Dewali days. This divine marriage of Krishna with Tulsi is the prelude to human marriages among the Hindus, and is performed with all the formality and solemnity of an earthly marriage, when crackers are let off and other pyrotechnic displays made. An *antarpat* consisting of a shawl is held between

the image of Krishna and the Tulsi plant, at the root whereof is placed a sugar-cane, and bangles and pieces of cloth steeped in turmeric powder are tied to the plant, and amidst the strains of the *Mangal-Astaks*, or articles of the indissoluble marriage contract, repeated by the family priest, the marriage is celebrated. To witness the Tulsi plant early in the morning, and to worship it daily, is considered highly meritorious. Once Uddhava, a great favourite of Krishna, put a question to Krishna as to the place of his favourite abode, and the latter promptly answered the query as follows :—The first place where he usually resided was the heart of his devotees, the second place where he lived was the company of saints who were dearer to him than himself, and the third place was near the Tulsi, his favourite spouse.

The fourteenth of Kartik Shud is celebrated as the *Vaikuntha Chaturdashi* holiday, and is sacred to the worship of Shankar by Vishnu, who specially left his usual place of abode called Vaikuntha for Varanashi to pay his respects to Shiva by worshipping him.

The fifteenth of Kartik Shud is sacred to Shankar, and is celebrated as Tripuri Pornima. On this day Shankar killed Tripurasur, a *daitya*, who being jealous of Shankar's glory as narrated by Narad, went to Kailas to fight

with him, and after three days desparate battle was slain by Shankar, who was rewarded with the worship of the gods. Hence all the temples dedicated to Shankar, such as Bhuleshwar, Walkeshwar, &c., are illuminated this day, and 720 cotton wicks joined together and mixed with *ghee* are made into one big lamp and burnt near the Tulsi plant by Hindu ladies on this night in honour of this event. There is also a fair held at Walkeshwar, lasting for several days in commemoration of Shankar's victory.

DATTA JAYANTI HOLIDAY.

On the 15th of Margashirsha is celebrated the Datta Jayanti in honour of the birth of Dattatraya, the personification of the Hindu Unity in Trinity and Trinity in Unity. Narad Muni, the great jester and fomenter of quarrels, having pleased Vishnu by his exemplary devotion, was asked by him to take any blessing he liked. Narad said that he was anxious to see his *Satvarup*, whereupon Vishnu replied that if he succeeded in making Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva one, he would easily see what he wanted. The Muni then visited the earth, resolving in his mind the best way whereby he might succeed in accomplishing his object, and suddenly reached the house of Atri Rishi, who was then absent from home, where he was received with due respect by his wife Anusuya, noted for her chastity. Narad then went to Vaikunth, the residence of Vishnu, and told Lakshmi, his wife, that he had travelled over all the three regions of the world but had not seen such a remarkably clever and chaste woman as Anusuya. Lakshmi was surprised to hear this account of a chaste lady living on the earth, and promised Narad to send her hus-

band Vishnu to test Anusuya's chastity. The Muni then went to Kailas with the object of narrating the account of Anusuya to Parvati, the wife of Shankar, and challenged her to rival the fame of the Rishi's wife as a chaste woman, and this excited the anger of Parvati, who said that she would presently send her husband to try Anusuya. Narad then went to Satyaloka, the residence of Brahma, and having given the same account as before to his wife Savitri, also induced her to send her husband to test the chastity of the Rishi's wife.

The Trinity then went to the residence of Atri in the disguise of Brahmans, and saying that they were hungry, asked Anusuya to give them food in a state of nudity. The lady was surprised at this request, and consulted her husband as to what she should do. The Rishi, who was himself a *yogi* and *átmadnyáni*, at once saw that the Trinity had visited his *ashram* on a persecuting mission, gave his wife some water, and told her to sprinkle it on the persons of the disguised mendicants, and afterwards give them food. She did as desired, and in an instant the Brahmans were transformed into babes, whereupon she fed them with her own milk, and satisfied them. Narad then suddenly visited the Rishi's residence, and having seen the

Trinity playing as children in his house was greatly delighted and informed the wives of the three mendicant Brahmans that they were then residing in the *ashram* of Atri Rishi, and, if necessary, he would show them the place where he lived from a distance. They then accompanied Narad to the residence of Anusuya, and having entered it, found their husbands playing as children. They were ashamed of their pride, and prostrated themselves before Anusuya, and supplicated her to restore their husbands to themselves, saying that the three children that were playing there were their respective husbands Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh. Anusuya then, at the bidding of her husband, sprinkled water over the children as before, and re-transformed them into Vidhi, Nilkantha, and Nilvarna. Narad then presented himself suddenly before the Trinity and asked them to show them their *Satvarup* now that they were there together. They then assumed the form of Dattatraya as desired by Narad. The day on which the birth of the great Sanyasi took place was Wednesday, the 14th of Margashirsha, at the rising of the Krittika Nakshatra.

Hari kirtans are delivered in celebration of this day in the temples dedicated to the worship of Dattatraya. This deity is re-

garded with the greatest reverence by the Hindus, who bow their heads with folded hands at the very mention of the name Datta. In the Garga Sanhita this deity is described as being very austere, and hence there are not many temples in Bombay dedicated to his worship. Among the most noted are the temples of Datta on the Girgaum Road, consecrated by the late Lakshman Harichandraji, proprietor, Clare and Carnac Bunders, otherwise known as Bhau Russell, and by Mr. Babu Ramchandra, pleader. The other three are respectively situated at Vidyaram's oart at Thakurdwar Lane, Baba Phatak's oart on the Girgaum Back Road, and Sitaram Balaji's Temple at Parel Junction, near Government House.

Thursdays are held particularly sacred to this deity. A fair is annually held at Kankeshwar, near Chewul, in honour of this day. The favourite resort of this deity is at the foot of the glomerous fig-tree (*Ficus glomerata*), which is consequently held in great veneration by the Hindus.

MAKAR SANKRANT HOLIDAY.

ORIGIN AND HISTORY.

On the Makar Sankrant holiday, the sun enters the southern sign of the zodiac called "Makar" or Capricorn. From this day till the time the sun leaves the most northern sign, "Karka" or Cancer, he is said to be in Uttarayan, and afterwards until he again reaches Makar he is said to be in Dakshyanayan. These two periods correspond with the vernal and autumnal equinoxes, and divide the year into two equal parts. The period of the Uttarayan is considered lucky by the Hindus, and that of the Dackshyanayan is esteemed unlucky. Marriages and thread ceremonies are celebrated in the first period. Such of the good men on the earth as die in the first period are considered more blessed than those who die in the second period, for the former go to heaven at once, whereas the latter have to wait outside until the Uttarayan begins.

The origin of this holiday goes back tc remote antiquity. In former times there lived a virtuous and chaste lady, named Kripi, the wife of the learned Rishi Dronacharya, ir whose absence from home one day in searcł

of *samidhas*, or sticks to light up the sacrificial fire, Durvas Muni visited his *ashram*, and was received with due respect by his wife, who said to the Muni that they were very poor and childless. Except an old cow they owned nothing in the world. She exhorted him to show her the best way to be happy. The Rishi was greatly moved by her request and asked her to observe the Sankrant holiday, which consisted in having a bath in the Ganges and presenting a quantity of curds to a Brahman. He mentioned the gift of Yeshoda, the wife of Nanda, of the same kind to a Brahman, and the consequent blessing of such a gifted son as the great Krishna to her, who freed them from their poverty and made Nanda, his father, the prince of cowherds. The Rishi also reminded her that that very day the sun had entered the sign of Makar, and she should lose no time in having a bath in the river with sesamum seed rubbed to her body, and making him the necessary gift, as he was hungry, and was fortunately for her at her house. This meritorious act, he assured her, would be rewarded with the blessing of a son who would absolve his father from the three debts or obligations described in the *Shastras*, namely (1) to the holy saints for the practice of religious duties; (2) to the gods for the peformance of sacrifice; and (3) to the fore-

fathers for offspring. She did as desired, and in the course of time was blessed with a worthy and renowned son, named Ashvatthama, and was freed from all care and anxiety.

The Back Bay presents a lively scene on this holiday. Thousands of Hindus go to the sea to bathe, accompanied by a Brahman priest. They rub their bodies with sesamum seed and wash themselves in the manner prescribed in the *Shastras*. Certain incantations, suited to the holiday, are then repeated by the Brahman, and the ceremony is closed by the adoration of the priest, and the offer of a money present to him. On returning home, Brahmans are invited and presented with *tilapatras*, or cups of bell metal filled with sesamum and some money according to the *yajaman's* means. Sometimes copper pots, brass lamps, new *dhotars*, umbrellas and other things are also presented. Friends and relations are invited for dinner, which consists of sweetmeats. In the evening new clothes and ornaments are put on, and the Hindus visit the houses of their friends and relatives for the distribution of the *tila* seed mixed with sugar. A cordial request is made at the time the *tilas* are distributed in the following words :—"Receive these *tila* seeds mixed with sugar, and behave like a friend throughout the year." Even

distant friends living in the mofussil are not forgotten. A small *kinkhab* bag containing *tila* seeds is sent through the post to friends and relatives in celebration of this great holiday, wishing the recipients of the welcome present a happy and prosperous new year.

MAHASHIVRATRA HOLIDAY.

The Mahashivratra holiday, corresponds with the fourteenth of Magha Vadya. It is observed as a fast day in honour of Shankar, and is devoted to the worship of the *linga* or *phallus*. Ordinary Vadya Chaturdashis, which fall on the twenty-ninth of every month, are held sacred to Shiva, but this day has its peculiar sanctity as the great night of Shankar.

The origin of this holiday goes back to remote antiquity. There lived on the Vindhyadri mountains an archer noted for his wicked and licentious habits. Having spent the whole day in the pursuit of game, at the approach of night he reached a lake, and climbing a Bela or Bilva tree (*Ægle marmelos*), broke off all the branches that hung round and above his head by way of recreation, and to get a clear view, and threw them down. These twigs, luckily for him, fell on a *linga* of Shiva consecrated by Bramha, which was at the foot of the sacred tree. His whole day's fasting, coupled with the repetition of the sacred names of Shiva, Hara, Hara, gradually wiped off all his sins, and pleased Shankar so much that he sent him a *viman* or

balloon from Kailas, his favourite abode, and made him its denizen. The hunter also that night acquired the further merit of sparing the lives of four deer who had come to the lake to quench their thirst. One of these deer in her former life was the celebrated fairy taken out by the gods and the demons at the churning of the ocean Kshirsagar, as one of the fourteen precious jewels. The other three deer were in their former lives the *daitya* Hiranya and the two maids of the fairy. This fairy, in the pride of her beauty and melodious voice, neglected the worship of Shankar, gave herself to drinking, and led a licentious life in the company of the wicked *daitya*, and when one day she, in the absence of Hiranya, went to Kailas to take Shankar's *darshan*, he was greatly excited and cursed her as a sinner, and consequently she became a female deer in the next life. She earnestly exhorted the angry deity for a remission of the curse, when he was pleased to say that after twelve years they would all obtain salvation. These deer still adorn the heavens as constellations.

The worship of the *linga* on this day consists of *Abhisheka* or washing with *bhang*, or the potion prepared from the leaves of the hemp (*Connabis sativa*), and after decorating the deity with choice flowers, the offering of one thousand leaves of the Beltree, with the

repetition of the *Sahasranam*, or one thousand sacred names of Shiva. Four different *pujas* are perfomed during this night at the beginning of each *prahara* or watch, and they commence at 8 p.m. and end at 5 a.m.

A fair is held at Elephanta or Gharapuri in celebration of this holiday. Mahableshwar Ujjayani, Somnath, Bhimashankar, Nagnath, Vaijnath, Trimbak, Rameshwar, and four other places are the seats of the twelve celebrated *jotilingas* of Mahadev, and are frequented by pilgrims in large numbers on this day.

THE HOLI FESTIVAL.

This festival, which commences a fortnight before the full moon of the Hindu month of Falgun, and is supposed by Sir William Jones to relate to the vernal equinox, and is similar to the Persian Jamshedi Nauroz, is held in honour of Krishna. The origin of these holidays goes back to remote antiquity. Tarkasur, the father of Tripur, was in former times a terror to the gods and goddesses, and troubled them so much that they supplicated Brahma, Vishnu and Indra to deliver them from their trouble. The three deities resolved in their minds the best way of uniting Shankar and Parvati, which would give birth to their son Shadanan, the slayer of Tarkasur, and having called Kamdev, ordered him to go to the Himandri Mountain and tempt Shankar into uniting himself with Parvati. Mahadev was then engaged in his *tapa*. Kamdev with his wife Rati accordingly went to the place where Shiva was engaged in his devotion, and Rati entered the body of Parvati and Madan stood before Shankar to tempt him. The spring filled the whole wood with fragrance. In the meantime birds with their chatter disturbed the medita-

tion of the lord of the Yogis. Nandi, the favourite animal of Shankar, was engaged at a distance in driving away the birds. Parvati was suddenly seized with the desire of uniting herself with Shankar, and stood behind the Indian Cupid. Shiva opened his eyes and saw Minketan standing before him. He charged Madan with having disturbed him in his devotion, and opened his third eye, known as *Bhallochán*, from which issued a blazing fire, which consumed Kamdev to ashes. This took place on the fifteenth of Falgun. All the followers of Mahadev, consisting of *shiva dutas*, *demons* and *ganas*, then indulged in coarse exclamations and jests, and rent the air with shouts of joy at Shankar's victory over the tempter. From that time it was ordained by Sadashiv that all mortals should make *holis*, or pits of fire, and observe this festival, otherwise they would become beggars.

On the twelfth day of the festival the Hindus go to different temples at night to take *ranga*. This paint consists of water boiled with the leaves of the oilnut tree (*Calophyllum inophyllum*), alum and quicklime. Dancing girls are engaged to entertain the visitors with singing until midnight. Children are also dressed with crimson-coloured clothes. Formerly saffron-coloured turbans were put on by the Hindus on these days.

On the fifteenth, or full-moon day, known as Falgun Paurnima, is observed the big *holi* day, when a large pit is dug in front of the house, or in temple compounds or oarts, and the fire is worshipped amidst the beating of *tasas*, *dhols* and other kinds of native music. In the morning a long *varghoda* or mock marriage procession starts from Naviwadi, and going by the Chira Bazaar and New Line Street, passes by Kalbadevi Road, Portuguese Church Street, Thakurdwar Lane, and Girgaum or Pallow Road, and returns to Naviwadi in about two hours. A Brahman, named Prabhakar, was in former times paid five rupees to act the part of the so-called bridegroom. He was dressed in a *jama* and wore a cone-shaped snuff-coloured turban, and rode a horse, with a very long Chinese umbrella over his head. In the time of Sir Frank Souter an attempt was made to stop this procession, but on the representation of a deputation of the Pathare Prabhu community, headed by Mr. Vinayak Ramchandra Lakshmanji, who waited on the Hon'ble Sir B. H. Ellis, permission was granted, and had it not been for the plague, it would not have been discontinued for the last seven years.

The last day of the festival is observed as the *dhula*, when the pit is covered over with earth, and in the evening the *abir* ceremony

takes place. It consists of the presentation of *abir*, a fragrant powder composed of sandal, zedoary, *Cyperus rotundus*, &c., in the temples when a *kirtan* is preached by a Hardas. In the freedom with which the lower classes behave towards their superiors, this festival resembles the Roman Saturnalia.